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DEPT FOR H - PASS SENATOR KERRY OFFICE

E.O. 12958: DECL: 10/22/2019

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [OVIP](#) [AF](#)

SUBJECT: Senator Kerry Meeting with Ismail Khan, Afghan Minister of Energy and Water

REF: Kabul 3182

Classified By: CDDEA Ambassador E. Anthony Wayne for reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

11. (C) Summary: Minister for Water and Energy (and former Herat Governor and mujahidin leader) Ismail Khan said October 16 that the Afghan people believe the international community is interfering in the Afghan elections and told visiting Senator John Kerry he believed many Afghan people would not vote in a run-off election. Senator Kerry emphasized the need for a transparent election process and President Karzai's pivotal role in supporting it. Khan described his experiences fighting the Taliban and ascribed the Taliban's resurgence to the international decision to disband the mujahidin and the Afghan National Army's "lack of conviction." Khan requested more allied support for training and equipment, repeating his call for a return of the mujahidin to oppose the Taliban. End summary.

12. (C) Senator Kerry and Coordinating Director for Development and Economic Affairs, Ambassador E. Anthony Wayne, met October 16 with Afghan Water and Energy Minister Mohammed Ismail Khan, a former mujahidin commander in western Afghanistan and Governor of Herat province. Khan argued that if a second runoff election is required, many people will not vote, having suffered enough Taliban violence through the first round. Khan also claimed that the Afghan people do not trust the election process and believe the international community has interfered. Senator Kerry rejected the accusation of interference and emphasized the importance of a fair election process to return legitimacy to the Afghan government in the eyes of the international community. Senator Kerry said it is time for President Karzai to be a leader: to support the fair election process and, if a runoff is required, run a transparent campaign.

13. (C) Khan spent much of the meeting lauding mujahidin fighters, using the map in his office to show the route of historic campaigns. He argued former mujahidin should be integrated into the Afghan National Army (ANA) and called for appointment of strong governors who can motivate the people. When asked whether he would rather be governor or a minister, Khan replied "security is more important than a ministry." [Note: Although Khan still enjoys strong support in his home province of Herat, he was nearly killed September 27 when his motorcade was the target of a suicide bomb there. A close advisor told emboffs Khan only survived because he was not in his usual vehicle. After the attack, Khan publically criticized current government security practices and according to other sources cooperated in efforts to go after those responsible for the attack on him (reftel). End note.]

14. (C) The Taliban has been able to regroup and become resurgent, in Ismail Khan's view, due to the lack of determination in the Afghan National Army and the international community's push several years ago to disband the mujahidin. Khan requested more allied support for training and equipment and warned that while the United States had fought both the communists and the Taliban in Afghanistan, only the mujahidin beat those two foes. When Senator Kerry asked if the Afghans would support the ISAF Coalition, Khan answered, "We're doing it for our own interest. War is bad for us. If you fail, we fail."

[15](#). (U) CODEL Kerry has cleared this message.

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